

Session 15-10 a Regular Meeting of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission was called to order on June 18, 2015 at 5:35 pm by Chair Matt Steffy at the Cowles Council Chambers City Hall located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska.

PRESENT: COMMISSIONERS ARCHIBALD, BRANN, LOWNEY, MACCAMPBELL, ROEDL, STEFFY

ABSENT: COMMISSIONER LILLIBRIDGE

STAFF: JULIE ENGBRETSSEN, DEPUTY CITY PLANNER
MELISSA JACOBSEN, DEPUTY CITY CLERK

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Chair Steffy called for a motion to approve the agenda.

BRANN/LOWNEY SO MOVED

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEMS ALREADY ON THE AGENDA

Roberta Highland, city resident, commented to reiterate that public safety is the number one concern and if it's simple, hopefully there will be buy in. She expressed concern about the drug use and is thinking of an ad hoc committee regarding that. She supports all the policies they have come up with and is empathetic to those who will have changes in their life. She understands it as a trail user and the development and building that it can be hard, but its part of life. She will personally struggle with no dogs on the berm because she likes to walk in that area, but it's a compromise so she's looking at it that way.

Louise Ashman, city resident, said she has learned a lot in coming to these meetings. She noted a new issue regarding a motorized parasail that has been launching from the berm in front of the slough and doing low passes in the area. She acknowledged float planes take off from Beluga Lake, expressed the importance of protecting the nesting birds in the area, and that this lower flying vehicle raises concern. She asked that this be added to the list of concerns. Other than that, she thinks the list in the packet looks great and thanked the Commission for considering the public input.

Tom Zitzman, city resident on Hidden Way, thanked the Commission for their work. From where they live, they see the beach every day. He supports the recommendations that have been developed so far. His concern is overwhelming backlash and resentment that will build if they are recommended to Council in their present state. He encouraged them to consider the most important aspects of their recommendation and prioritize what we really need. One being the area from the pavilion to the east shouldn't have vehicles, and despite the signage, they are there every night. He thinks the addition of two additional police officers isn't likely to pass but Council could support periodic ticketing sessions in the area, and after a few of those sessions, parking on the berm will happen less often. His personal

feeling is cars shouldn't be allowed at all with the exception of gathering coal. Education and signage are important aspects.

Rick Vann, city resident on Charles Way, hasn't seen too much of a problem in the area and less traffic than in the past. He thinks we just need to enforce the rules we have, which include no one driving to the left and on the berm. He agrees with better signage to define where people can and can't drive would be helpful. He has talked to people who have been driving fast and a lot of times they will slow down. A garbage area for people to put their trash would be helpful, there used to be one there. As far as drug use, all cities have problems with it, but most of all we have pretty good people around here. With some signage and education, we can all get along.

Mike Warburton, city resident, agrees that limiting vehicles on the beach would make life easier for him and his guests. The police help when there are parties on the beach and the trash isn't as bad as it used to be. If they do something regarding no vehicles on the beach, he will still need to get down there with his truck a few times a year to do maintenance on his trail and property and a permit for property owners could be a workable solution.

Lori Zitzman, city resident on Hidden Way, encouraged compromise so people don't feel like their rights are being taken away. She suggested only banning vehicles in the summer season when the birds are nesting and more people are on the beach, and let them ride in the off season. She also agrees that intermittent ticketing would help reduce the traffic to the east and on the berm.

Bill Ostwald, property owner on east Bunnell, said he is most concerned about reckless driving and drug use on the beach. He likes the Commission's recommendation and said we have to stop traffic on the beach if we're going to get a handle on the problems down there. It happens at all hours of the night. He agrees the biggest concern is safety and that enforcement is a key issue. He asked about the status of traffic control measures that were discussed. Deputy City Planner Engebretsen said it's her understanding it's been designed, but she know when it will be constructed. She will ask the City Manager for follow up.

VISITORS

RECONSIDERATION

ADOPTION OF THE CONSENT AGENDA

A. Minutes for the Special meeting of May 21, 2015

Chair Steffy called for a motion to adopt the consent agenda.

LOWNEY/BRANN MOVED TO APPROVE.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT

Motion carried.

STAFF & COUNCIL REPORTS/COMMITTEE REPORTS/BOROUGH REPORTS

A. Staff Report – Julie Engebretsen, Deputy City Planner

Deputy City Planner Engebretsen commented to the Commission about recent layoffs in the City, and losing a member in Planning who was able to transfer to another department. The reduction in her department will mean less time for her to work on Parks and Recreation things and the City is anticipating a large shortfall for next year. She expects there will be a broader community conversation, and that the cuts will be big next year, like programs and services. She encouraged the group to keep an eye on things. The budget and CIP will be on the agenda again in August.

B. Parks & Recreation Annual Conference Update – Matt Steffy

Chair Steffy commented that he will email the initial conference teaser to the clerk’s office to be sent out to the group. It can also be seen on the Alaska Recreation and Parks Association webpage.

C. Community Recreation Report – Mike Illg

D. Parks Report – Angie Otteson

E. Critical Habitat - Matt Steffy

Chair Steffy referenced the information regarding vehicles in the critical habitat area, noting there are exceptions, below the mean low water line all around Kachemak Bay and critical habitat area. If we were looking at a seasonal prohibition on vehicles in Zone 8 we would need to ask the city to enter into an agreement with the refuge system of ADF&G to get that zone added to the exemption list.

Commissioner Archibald clarified the areas permitted has been a general permit issued for areas you can go on with a vehicle from Anchor Point to Bidarki Creek. But from Bidarki Creek in, Fish & Game says it’s illegal until such time anyone entertains to put in an application for a general permit.

PUBLIC HEARING

PENDING BUSINESS

A. Review of Draft Council Presentation

Deputy City Planner Engebretsen reviewed the information in the packet.

The Commission provided the following feedback:

- Page 21 - change became more aware of the bird habitat, to more aware of inappropriate activities in the bird habitat along the grassy berm and change teenage beach users to user groups of all ages.
- It needs to be brought to Council’s attention it’s illegal to drive on the beach now. A slide with a map of the area could be included.
- Talking points regarding active enforcement, officers on the beach, versus passive enforcement, install a gate.

- The importance of more succinct signage that states no vehicles and states the fine, also defining it is a critical habitat area/wildlife refuge.
- Addressing effective ways to educate the community on the policy.
- Security cameras would be less costly than personnel and is something to be considered relating to enforcement. They touch on some challenges and benefits of cameras and there may be grants available to the police department.
- Installing a gate to eliminate access to the beach and allowing land owners to access their beach front property to do maintenance through a permitting system.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Budget Review for 2016

In response to questions about the the West Homer Elementary trail, Rogers Loop trail and Hornaday Park phase three, Deputy City Planner Engebretsen said money is in place for those and will report back with status updates. Question was also raised regarding the parking and beach access trail to the beach on Crittenden. She said that would be addressed through a budget request and will try to have a spreadsheet with budget requests for them to review in August.

Chair Steffy commented in support of funding for the infrastructure to support the enactment of the beach policy.

Commissioner Archibald commented about the need for improvements at the ball fields. Deputy City Planner Engebretsen commented it's a matter of budgeting for maintenance and improvements. She noted there isn't water to Jack Gist Park and until it's there, it won't be pretty but there have been improvements to the turf out there. There has also been money spent on improving the fields at Hornaday Park. If we can identify what's missing, hopefully we can be more successful in the future. That will be a good discussion to have when Parks Maintenance Coordinator Otteson is here so the group can hear her input.

They touched on the need for participation through adopt a park and adopt a trail programs and also by the community.

The Commission agreed this needs to be a future agenda item regarding reciprocal relationships with the City and its facilities.

B. Review of the Capital Improvement Plan

Some of the budget discussion tied in with CIP projects and the Commission will discuss the CIP again in August. Chair Steffy encouraged the Commissioners to review the projects before the August meeting.

INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS

- A. Commission Annual Calendar 2015
- B. Commissioner Attendance at City Council Meetings 2015

Chair Steffy said he could attend the Council meeting on June 29, Commissioner Brann agreed to attend

on August 10, and Commissioner Archibald agreed to attend August 24.

COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE

Asia Freeman, city resident in Old Town and member of the PARC committee, thanked the Commission for their hard work and progress on the beach policy. She is excited about the potential civilizing activity that could be taking place as a result of their work. Regarding the Park, Arts, Recreation and Culture needs assessment she commented that they are about a year into it and she is hopeful about what can come of that. She thanked Julie for her incredible service and acknowledged that due to staff cutting, Julie won't be able to continue to provide backbone support for PARC. On behalf of the old town residents and of the bigger arts and culture community Ms. Freeman thanked Julie and gave her a small bird carving in appreciation.

Tom Zitzman, city resident, commented he attended a few council meetings last summer and complained about Bishops Beach. He has learned here that he wasn't really aware of the 2007 Beach Policy and not knowledgeable of what tools were available to the city. In having listened to this group's discussion he understands community members need to be responsible for what is happening down there.

Louise Ashman, city resident, said after tonight's discussion she wanted to emphasize that from the perspective of Homer beaches being critical habitat, it is currently illegal to drive on all city beaches and that the current practice is against the policy law that's been in place. That needs to be really clear because there will be a lot of community outpouring about the fact that we've always done it. Secondly with the issue of budget cuts and implementation and enforcement issues, they have to be careful not to back off any policy recommendations based on whether they can be enforced. Lastly, in terms of education efforts, they all involve citizenry but we also need to educate the influx of tourists. Having the policy available to guests, and also signage will be very important.

Bill Ostwald, city resident, doesn't think it will be as bad as others think regarding the Commission's proposal. He has talked about it to people in the community who have said it's about time. He knows quite a few people who won't go to Bishops Beach because of the activity there and they think it will be a welcomed change. He said the word "no" is one of the hardest in the English language, but by saying it and sticking to it there is really no misunderstanding it.

COMMENTS OF THE CITY STAFF

COMMENTS OF THE COUNCILMEMBER *(If one is present)*

COMMENTS OF THE COMMISSION

Commissioner Brann thanked the audience for coming and staff for their work. He encouraged everyone to get out in the sunshine and out on the bay, this is a great place to live.

Commissioner Archibald thanked everyone for coming out and thanked staff.

Commissioner MacCampbell thanked the audience for their coming tonight and sticking with it through the beach policy review.

Commissioner Lowney thanked staff. She really appreciated the quality information in the packet. It was a good meeting.

COMMENTS OF THE CHAIR

Chair Steffy echoed the previous comments and thanked everyone for being here. He added that the Highland Games are this weekend and encouraged people to attend.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Chair Steffy adjourned the meeting at 7:00 p.m. The next **REGULAR MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR THURSDAY, AUGUST 20, 2015** at 5:30 p.m. at City Hall Cowles Council Chambers 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska.

Melissa Jacobsen, CMC, Deputy City Clerk

Approved: _____